



FEMA

NEWS RELEASE STATE/FEDERAL DISASTER FIELD OFFICE JOINT INFORMATION CENTER



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DISASTER HELPLINE, YOUR LINK TO DISASTER INFORMATION

EVERETT, WA – Disaster assistance information is as near as your telephone for residents of Washington's 15 counties who sustained damage as a result of the October 15-23, 2003 severe storms and flooding.

President Bush, on November 7, declared Chelan, Clallam, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Mason, Okanogan, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston and Whatcom Counties as disaster areas following the mid-October severe weather.

Those who sustained storm damage and have questions about their application for disaster assistance, or who were unable to visit one of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC), can obtain information by calling FEMA's Helpline, **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**. Those with speech or hearing impairment should call **TTY 1-800-462-7585**.

"We call it the Helpline because that's what we're here to do," said Anthony Russell, the federal official in charge of long-term disaster recovery. "For a variety of reasons, many of those affected by the October 15th through 23rd storms could not personally visit a DRC. The Helpline provides them with the same quality service."

The Helpline number is available everyday until further notice, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The number is the same as the FEMA application number, **1-800-621-3362 (TTY 1-800-462-7585)**, but when calling select the Helpline option.

Diane R. Offord, the state coordinating officer for the recovery operation, said, "Our objective is to provide a means for everyone affected by the October storms to be able to contact us for disaster assistance. We recognize that there are some who were not able to visit one of our centers, and we want them to have the same access to information."

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration.

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Note to Editors: Disaster information is available on FEMA's World Wide Web at <http://www.fema.gov> or the Washington Emergency Management Division at <http://emd.wa.gov>